





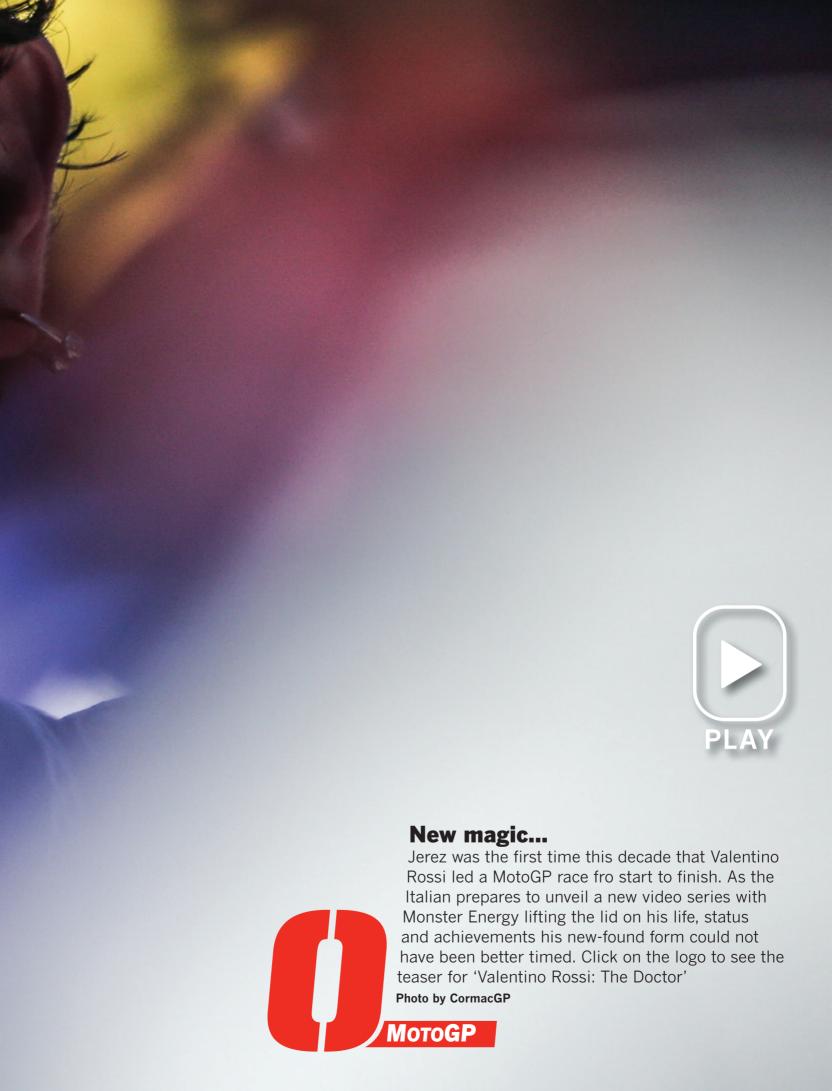
• @ride100percent www.ride100percent.com

INTRODUCING
THE NEW RACECRAFT "TIEDYE"















HEAD & BRAIN PROTECTION

360 TURBINE TECHNOLOGY: UP TO 30% REDUCTION OF HEAD IMPACT AT CONCUSSION LEVEL UP TO 40% REDUCTION OF ROTATIONAL ACCELERATION TO HEAD AND BRAIN







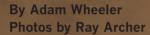
WWW.LEATT.COM





GRAND PRIX OF LATVIA KEGUMS - MAY 1st - Rnd 6 of 18

MXGP winner: Tim Gajser, Honda MX2 winner: Someone in orange...



TIM GAJSER SEEMS TO BE THROTTLING MXGP AS MUCH AS HIS FACTORY HONDA AS THE ROOKIE PRODUCED A SPELL-BINDING PERFORMANCE IN LATVIA LAST WEEKEND TO EARN HIS FOURTH VICTORY FROM THE SIX ROUNDS THIS SEASON. CAIROLI ALMOST SWOOPED TO HIS FIRST TRIUMPH IN A YEAR, FEBVRE WAS BACK ON THE BOX, HERLINGS DISAPPEARED AGAIN IN MX2 AND PLENTY MORE HAPPENED IN THE FAST BUMPS AND HOLES OF KEGUMS

AKIND OF WALLDNIES





MXG Priders knew what they'd find at Kegums: ripples, holes, the finest of sand with a hard base and an open and well organised circuit that welcomes fans from the eastern climes of Europe. With rainfall the Kegums course churns and slows. Without, the track is a tough beast that needs a brave right hand, decent suspension config and no shortage of balls.

What many didn't know was just how much Honda Gariboldi's Tim Gajser would further etch his name into the early chapters of the 2016 MXGP story with an unlikely fourth victory from the six rounds of the series thus far. Latvia was only the second appointment in Europe and the Slovenian's success was born from a startling recovery in the wake of a second-lap-second-moto tumble that saw him bolt from outside the top twenty to fourth on the final circulation and (gingerly) walk the top step once more.

What did we learn from Kegums? That Red Bull KTM's Tony Cairoli is getting closer to the '222' that we remember. The Sicilian may have been beaten by a rampant Romain Febvre (the world champion back on the podium after his Mexican blip two weeks ago and better in the second moto after adjusting his works YZ450FM in the break) but came within a lap of a first victory since the British Grand Prix in the summer of 2015. "We were close but we are still not where we want to be," Cairoli said after only his second podium appearance this year. "I miss some fitness to be honest but I am working on it every week. The track was very technical and difficult and if you are not fit then it is hard to push on these types of tracks. Tim was very strong and deserved this victory. I'm starting to get good speed in training now. There is plenty of time to come up to the top step where we want to be."

Not everybody was enjoying the 450SX-F. 2015 victor Glenn Coldenhoff is having a minor crisis of confidence in terms of gaining starts and marking a pace to reach the top ten and Wilvo Virus Performance KTM's Shaun Simpson also lamented a set-up in which he struggled with his rear shock.







We also learned that Jeremy Van Horebeek's persistence could pay off come the end of the season. The Belgian just missed the podium again and his ever-presence lacks a little inspiration but he is gaining points and remaining in the hunt, with Febvre and Gajser split by just one point at the top of the standings and the tightest premier class championship dispute after six rounds since the start of the four-stroke era.

Gajser continues to impress with his versatility on the CRF450RW. 243 has generally made light work of his success thanks to some excellent starts but his crash and subsequent tap by Rockstar Husqvarna's Max Nagl saw him burying the Honda like his manhandled (and oft abused) 250 from 2015. Even the nineteen year old was forced to admit afterwards "I was too aggressive and had to calm down. I was pushing too much." Gajser had some near-misses but completed his task in Latvia and sounded another alarm to his rivals.

It was a shame to see Clement Desalle hit the gate and become embroiled in a second moto collision that cast another DNF. We have yet to see the Belgian at anything like his potential of 2009-15 and on the new works Monster Energy Kawasaki. Kevin Strijbos suffered a holed clutch due to a bizarre collision with team-mate Ben Townley (the New Zealander was fit and strong after recovering from a virus but was also jumpy and error-prone and is arguably still adjusting to Grand Prix life and its demands).

2016
PIM MOTOCROSS
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MONTER

MONTER

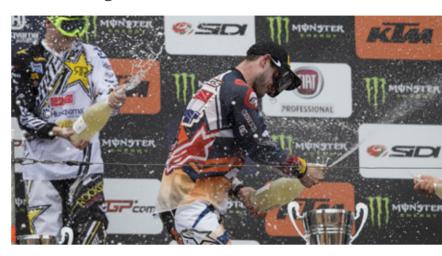
MONTER

WHERE I ARREST

WHOTE HONOTE

WHOTE H

Onto MX2 and finally Rockstar Husqvarna's Max Anstie was able to score his first podium on the FC250 and in front of perennial top-three finisher Suzuki's Jeremy Seewer. Anstie has now taken trophies with four different brands in MX2. 2016 is his last in the class and before moving to MXGP with the IceOne team.



The winner? Need we say? Six out of six, twelve out of twelve, 300 points, 53 career victories and 21 years of age: Jeffrey Herlings is becoming an irrepressible machine once more in MX2. The cynics among his rivals could wait for the first slip from the Dutchman – who is still pushing hard at a fantastic rate and lapped everyone up to eight place in the second moto at Kegums – and it is basically the only hope that the rest of the MX2 field have as Herlings is clearly at a superior level. There was no hint of humour from Anstie after the GP as he commented: "Jeffrey has got a little bit on us all at the moment". An earnest form of denial as the truth is quite painful to bear.

Teutschenthal is the second of three in a row for MXGP this week and for the first time since the 2012 Motocross of Nations it will be curious to see what the MSC club have in store for 2016. The hard-pack was shoddily prepared last year and scandalously watered through the weekend to create some perilous conditions that gathered the scorn of the paddock and provoked statements of concern from Youthstream. The Grand Prix of Sweden was in the same mire in 2015 and vanished from the MXGP slate. Teutschenthal remained, and what will the historic curves hold come the weekend?







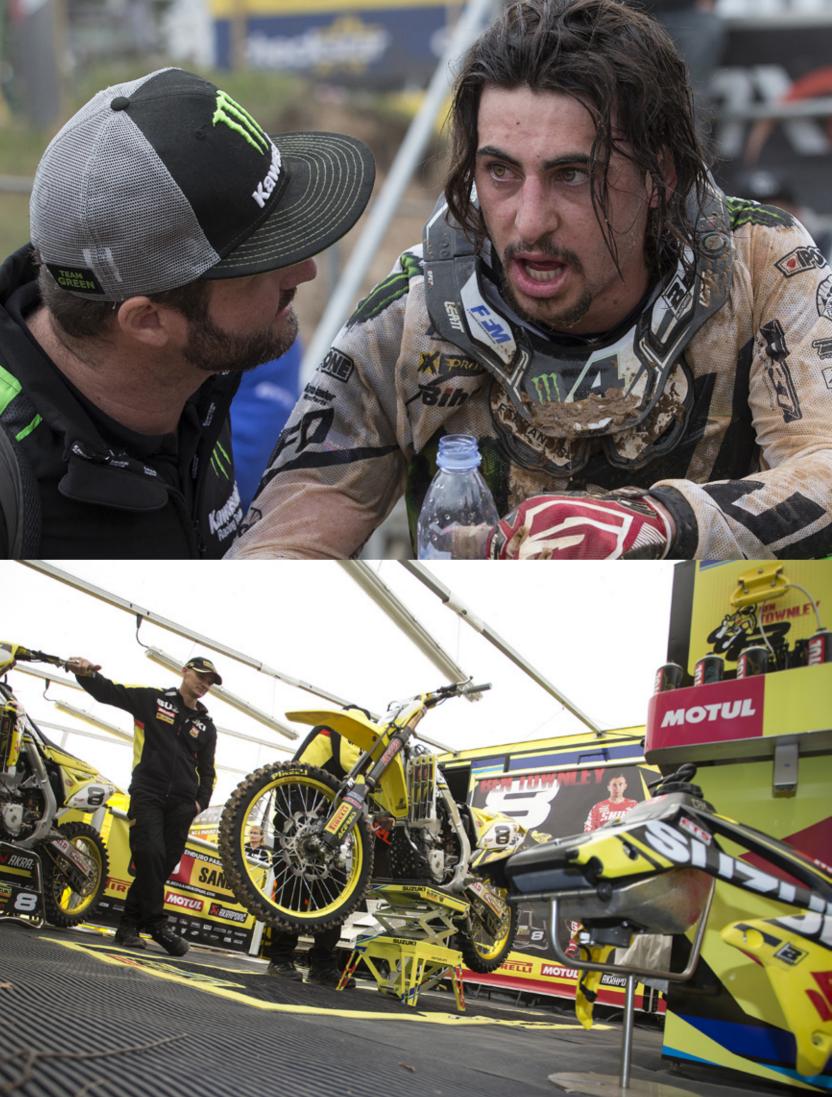












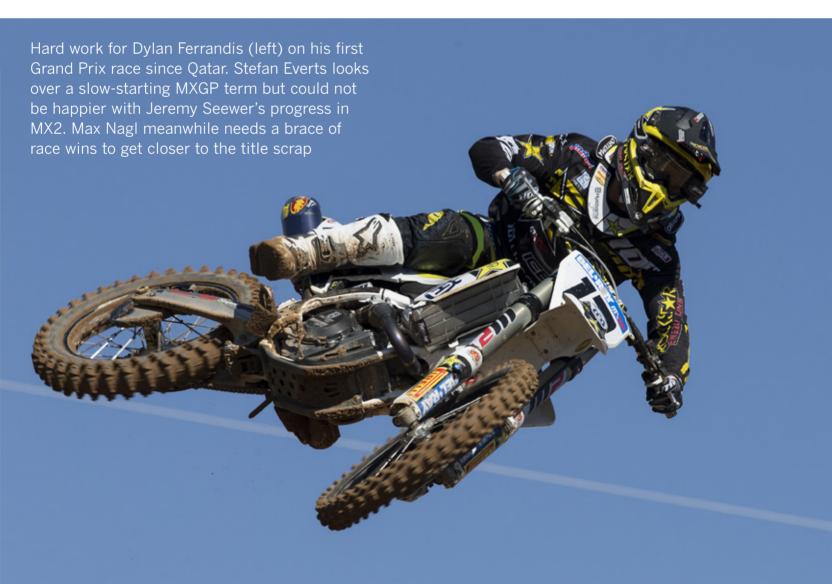
CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MXGP OVERALL RESULT				
Riders				
1	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda		
2	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM		
3	Romain Febvre, FRA	Yamaha		
4	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	Yamaha		
5	Max Nagl, GER	Husqvarna		

MX2 OVERALL RESULT				
Riders				
1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM		
2	Max Anstie, GBR	Suzuki		
3	Jeremy Seewer, SUI	Kawasaki		
4	Petar Petrov, BUL	KTM		
5	Dylan Ferrandis, FRA	Yamaha		

MXGP STANDINGS AFTER 6 OF 18 ROUNDS				
R	iders	Points		
1	Romain Febvre	260		
2	Tim Gajser	259		
3	Tony Cairoli	213		
4	Max Nagl	203		
5	Jeremy Van Horebeek	200		

MX2 STANDINGS AFTER 6 OF 18 ROUNDS				
R	iders	Points		
1	Jeffrey Herlings	300		
2	Jeremy Seewer	230		
3	Pauls Jonass	193		
4	Petar Petrov	165		
5	Aleksandr Tonkov	163		











here is one big secret behind Tim Gajser's rapid emergence and success as an MXGP athlete in 2016: union jack socks. We were as surprised as the next man to see the HRC rider sporting Britain's colours under his knee braces in a candid moment while changing in the Gariboldi awning at the Grand Prix of Europe for some Fox photos recently. And judging by his laughter and finger pointing (as if we'd spill the beans...?) the Slovenian was also not expecting to explain his underwear livery. So there you have it: British power for the second MXGP rookie in as many years to dazzle the establishment in the premier class.

Clothing preferences and jokes aside one of the most common questions surrounding Tim Gajser in MXGP right now is: 'how?'. With every pole position secured, lap led and Grand Prix win banked (now four from the six in 2016) the surprise factor diminishes slightly but Gajser is still defying expectations. At the aforementioned Grand Prix of Europe he'd win the first moto in what was a total reverse of his experience at Valkenswaard the previous year where a massive crash on Saturday led to his worst weekend of the '15 term.

At Kegums last weekend the 243 looked a little ragged. For the first time this season '250-Tim' was back in play as he pushed the CRF450RW harder than we'd seen to-date. The subsequent speed was devastating and effective...but also edgy and put the nineteen year old on the periphery of another race crash. The 'he's due a big one' feeling is a case of déjà vu when onlookers were throwing the same claims towards Romain Febvre twelve months ago...and look how that turned out.

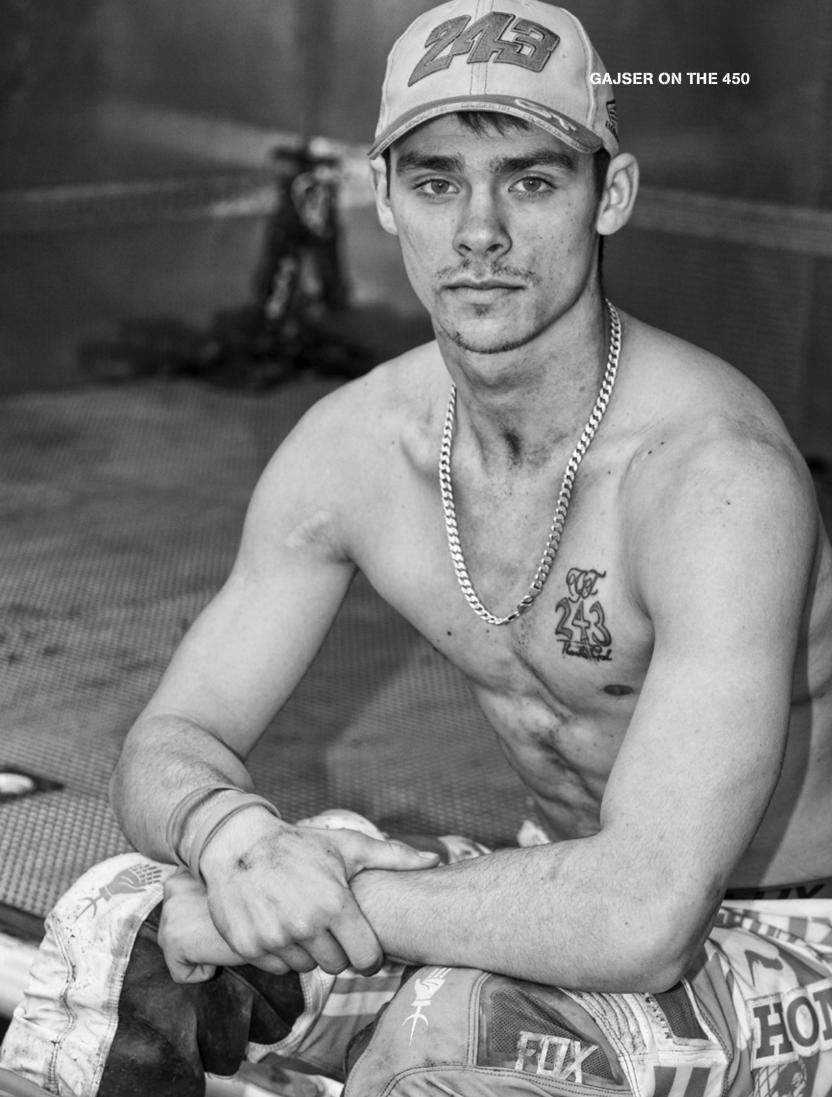
While the likes of Tony Cairoli, Febvre and even Jeremy Van Horebeek and Max Nagl will still have a lot to say in the '16 title story – and that's not forgetting the skills and alternative mindset of athletes like Gautier Paulin and Clement Desalle – Gajser has made a big play to be the second newcomer to lift MXGP honours. "Actually I'm a bit surprised," he admits after sitting down, fully dressed and asked to turn a mirror on his season so far. "I knew I was quick and was fast in testing and in the pre-season races but I was saying in interviews that I had no idea where I would be and didn't want to put pressure on myself."

It seems like you are another guy on the 450; where is the rev-happy aggressive rider from MX2?

Now I think I am the real Tim! I was training a lot with a 450 and riding like I do now in practice all the time but coming to a race you are a bit nervous and switching back to a 250 meant something different. Perhaps that's why I was giving it a lot of revs and, well, not riding it so nicely. This year I have worked a lot with my Dad on the style because the 450 means a completely different type of riding; you don't use the clutch so much, you don't rev, you don't shift as much and I think it just suits me more.

Riding a 450 is one thing but racing it against Cairoli, Paulin, Desalle and Febvre is another...

Every time you go out there: you learn. And every time it can be better because there are always small mistakes. I knew the bike from practice but being there with those rivals somehow makes it different. Back in Slovenia I train alone so that was the big adjustment.





Is it mental thing? Taking practice speed to a Grand Prix track...

I think so. A Grand Prix track can be so different each week and you have to be prepared for anything and everything; sand, rain, mud, hard-pack. You have to be consistent everywhere and I think I have made good gains in the sand because two-three years ago I was not that good and didn't train in it that much. We spent a lot of time in Sardinia. We had a problem with the bike in the pre-season races so we had to test to solve that and things keep coming up to face or deal with. I'm comfortable now and a good example is Valkenswaard because last year it was one of my worst races of the season...

Is life racing the 450 easier?

I would say 'yes'. I'm a tall guy and quite big and on the 250 we were struggling to balance the bike and get good starts and be able to ride it how I wanted. On the 450 I feel like I am 'home' and I am at one with it; I really enjoy it!

Why?

Because the power the HRC guys have made is unbelievable. Also the handling feels just like a 250; it helps! We are still testing and trying to improve a little everywhere and that's what I like about working with the Japanese; they always want to find better, better, better. Even though the results are good we still need to work.

Are you ever near the limit? Near the edge? No...I always want to go faster and faster.

Did you have to alter your training much?

We changed quite a lot actually and mostly because I finished my studies. I have a lot more time and I'm doing a lot more. I can actually do two sessions in a day now! It is a programme I never had before because the mornings were about going to school. It has been easier and I have more time to rest. On

the I am thinking about less things. Before my mind would drift about things I needed to do or organise and I wasn't focussed. My Dad is my trainer, like always, and helped a lot.

Qatar was a surprise but you have moved on since. Are you ready for a title fight?

I still don't feel pressure from the team, my Dad or anybody and I can treat the races like fun. I try to make each race like practice and that is the goal for every GP...because I know I will do well. Many people are asking me about the title now but there is still so long to go.... even if we are in a good position! I keep Qatar - or that winning feeling - in the back of my mind and I think it is important. Your head is everything. If you have that feeling that you are the best then you can beat everyone.

You are already a world champion but are you ready to be a star?

Yeah! For sure! That was the dream when I was young and many times I thought about being one of the very best and being a big name in the world of motocross. It is getting closer and I am very happy and thankful to everyone who helped me get to that level. I know without my family and the many that helped out when I didn't have sponsors or a team behind me then I wouldn't be here. I can say that I am living a dream right now.

You must have treated yourself after Qatar...

I'm not really that kind of guy...but I did buy a car! I'm not someone who needs to be on a beach. If we have a week off from the races or travelling then I prefer to be home.

You've mentioned a girlfriend in interviews recently...is there now a 'Mrs' Gajser?

I have a girlfriend in Slovenia and we've been together for a few months now. She hasn't been to the races yet and we're just going slowly. She knows me for who I am and I love that.









ANSWER

A mid-priced helmet (around 250 dollars) with MIPs (multi directional impact protection) technology is an attractive and sensible option from Answer considering the amount of wear an off-road lid goes through. The Evolve 3 emphasises safety and quality but at an affordable price. The helmet is shown here in black, white and camo models and has some other high-end features. Answer claim: 'Modern helmet shells have many sculptured ridges and valleys in them. Most helmets, including some very expensive brands, do not have an impact absorbing expanded polystyrene (EPS) liner that follows and fills in those peaks and valleys. The EVOLVE 3 MIPS EPS liner does fill in those peaks and valleys and this creates improved impact absorption. Safety is key with all our helmets and the EVOLVE 3 MIPS passes two of the toughest safety standards today. Comfort is addressed with our round-oval Shell shape and using, top of the line SilverCool wicking material in the interior. Shell design features great venting, a strengthened chin bar and large eye port that accommodate most goggles including "over the glasses" types.'

Full details on the tech specs include:

- -Meets/exceeds the ECE 22-05 safety standard
- -Meets or exceeds the D.O.T. FMVSS 218 safety standard
- -Shell made of injection molded polycarbonate MIPS liner in between the comfort foam and the EPS liner
- -SilverCool moisture wicking liner is removable for easy washing
- -SilverCool liner also reduces odor and is antimicrobial
- -9 intake and exhaust vents help keep you cool
- -4 eyebrow vents help evaporate sweat before it drips into eyes and goggles
- -Wire mesh chinbar vent has foam filter
- -Flexible rubber nose/cheek piece to help deflect roost
- -Weight 3.2 pounds, 1480 grams (size medium)



MIPS changes the way to think about helmet safety. Developed by brain surgeons and scientists to reduce rotational forces on the brain caused by angled impacts to the head. Adding MIPS to the Evolve 3 helmet brings state of the art safety technology other companies charge double the price for. Modern helmet shells have many sculptured ridges and valleys in them. Most helmets, including some very expensive brands, do not have an impact absorbing EPS liner that follows and fills in those peaks and valleys. The Evolve 3 MIPS dual density liner does fill in those peaks and valleys and this creates improved impact absorption. Safety is key with all our helmets and the Evolve 3 MIPS passes two of the toughest safety standards today.

FEATURES /

- Meets or exceeds the ECE 22-05 safety standard
- Meets or exceeds the D.O.T. FMVSS 218 safety standard
- Shell made of injection molded polycarbonate
- MIPS liner in between the comfort foam and the dual density EPS liner
- SilverCool® moisture wicking liner is removable for washing
- SilverCool® padding also reduces odor and is anti-microbial
- 9 intake and exhaust vents help keep you cool
- Wire mesh chinbar vent has foam filter
- Weight 3.2 pounds, 1450 grams (size medium)



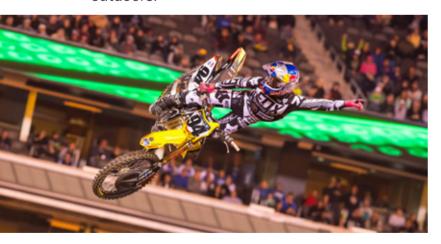




The penultimate round of Monster Energy Supercross series has come and gone. Amazingly, just one round left out of seventeen and much of the drama has been taken out of that with some good rides by the two 250SX championship point leaders in recent weeks. Of course 450SX has been a forgone conclusion for a number of months and in New Jersey this past Saturday night, it was made official. Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey took home his third 450SX title and second in a row with a dominant season.

It wasn't all roses as Dungey's 31-race podium streak (almost two years!) came to an end with his fourth place but as much as we're sure Ryan would've liked to have maintained the streak, he'll take the 'consolation' prize of the title.

More on Dungey in a moment but the other big winner from the night was RCH Suzuki's Ken Roczen who took his second race in a row, fifth of the season, in resolute form. In fact his 19-second gap to second was the largest margin of victory by anyone in the 450SX class in 2016. He's been on a roll lately and although it's a case of 'too little, too late' this does bode well for Kenny and the team for the upcoming outdoors.



"I came here today and we struggled a little bit in practice. I think everybody did, even if you would ride here five times in a row in the week. The track was hard, it was rocky. It was kind of shitty, actually," said the always-candid Roczen after the main event while signing autographs for fans outside his motorhome "But I'm a racer; every time I come to racing I put my head

down and charge. So about tonight there's not really anything I have to say about it. I think we actually came out of here perfectly. Done a good job in the heat race and we put our focus down in the main."

The start in Jersey was huge with the track being short and kind-of tight and technical. And it also had only one right hand turn, which was the first time this reporter can remember a track being that favored to one way or another. Roczen started in the same gate in both the heat and main event and wasn't to be denied. Great ride for the 21 year old and a nice performance after a so-so qualifying effort left him in sixth, a performance that Roczen wrote off to not caring all that much about.

As far as the champ, well like we said his podium streak ended but with one round left he's going for a career high in wins in a season this weekend in Las Vegas. The guy that was overlooked indoors for a number of years has climbed all the way to the very top of the mountain in a side of the sport that never came as easy to him as motocross in the last couple of years.

"I definitely gave it my best and did what I could but I wasn't going to do anything stupid either," Dungey told Racer X Online afterwards. "I was going to race hard and get to the front as best as I could. Like I said, the goal was to get the championship. It's nice to be able to have a little cushion to wrap it up one round early. It was consistent I feel like across the board, the whole season. Fourth place, if that's our worst finish up until round 16 I don't think that's that bad."

Dungey hasn't ridden as well the last two weeks as the previous fourteen and you have to wonder if it was the 'playing it safe' mentality or the soft, rutty nature of the two tracks located in the northeastern USA locales. Besides Roczen, the next rider that's stepped up has been Monster Kawasaki's Eli Tomac. After riding around in a bit of a fog all season (other than his Daytona SX win) Tomac, like Roczen, has poured it on the last three weeks.

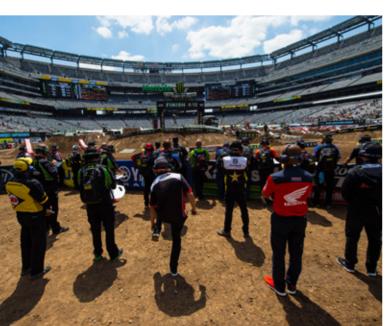




In talking to the team, there were some changes made within Tomac's personal "team" of techs, the bike was broken down to the beginning stages and the team headed to Tomac's in Colorado to start fresh.

The result was a KX450F that was new in many ways and agreed with Eli. In fact it was so much better than he reportedly was a second faster after the week was up on his own personal supercross track. We saw some great qualifying from Eli in St Louis but a crash in the first turn and a bent shifter didn't let us see what he could do. Last week he blitzed to a second place and the same this week. The way he caught, passed Dungey, Honda's Cole Seely and BTOSports KTM's Justin Brayton and dropped was amazing. Tomac took his second runner-up finish and looks to be a new man out there. And like Roczen, just in time for the outdoors also.

In the 250SX class it was GEICO Honda's Malcolm Stewart putting on a riding clinic and taking his second win of the season. Combine that ride with Star Yamaha's Aaron Plessinger finishing fifth then it widened Stewart's points lead to fourteen with a race to go. Stewart, who admitted that having the red plate was a creating a bit of pressure, rode great to grab the lead from Rockstar Husky's Martin Davalos and ride off with the win. The whoops and dragon-back were a huge advantage for Mookie out there as he rode like someone who felt no pressure of being the points leader.





Davalos hung on to second and after his win last week has to be ruing the day he ever hired his immigration lawyer that didn't/couldn't fill out the proper paperwork to get him to the Toronto round. He'd be right there in the points if he had managed a podium up north. Third was Plessinger's teammate Jeremy Martin who looks like he could be pulling the unique trick of being a multi-time 250MX champion who failed to win a 250SX title unless he pulls off a miracle this weekend.

But the big winners in New Jersey were Dungey and Roczen with one rider knowing he was the man all season and the other one knowing that if he had only started off better, things might have been different.

"I would say it was a perfect race. My lap times were really, really consistent and fast. It might have been my best ride I've done so far," said Roczen and we would have to agree. In fact, it might have been the best supercross race ridden all season long. However over in the orange pits where the celebration was ongoing, they can simply point to the scoreboard and know they were the real winners.











AMA-SX CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA 450SX RESULT				
Riders				
1	Ken Roczen, GER	Suzuki		
2	Eli Tomac, USA	Kawasaki		
3	Cole Seely, USA	Honda		
4	Ryan Dungey, USA	KTM		
5	Justin Brayton, USA	KTM		

AMA 450SX STANDINGS (AFTER 16 OF 17 ROUNDS)				
Ri	iders	Points		
1	Ryan Dungey	366		
2	Ken Roczen	330		
3	James Anderson	293		
4	Eli Tomac	270		
5	Chad Reed	232		

AMA 250SX EAST RESULT				
Riders				
1	Malcolm Stewart, USA	Honda		
2	Martin Davalos, USA	Husqvarna		
3	Jeremy Martin, USA	Yamaha		
4	Shane McElrath, USAA	KTM		
5	Aaron Plessinger, USA	Yamaha		

(AFTER 8 OF 9 ROUNDS)				
Ri	ders	Points		
1	Malcolm Stewart	160		
2	Aaron Plessinger	146		
3	Jeremy Martin	141		
4	Martin Davalos	130		
5	Shane McElrath	109		

AMA 250SX EAST STANDINGS









BELL RINGING ON SX...

By Steve Matthes

This 450SX season must have been what the confederates felt like all those years ago in the Civil War. They knew that it was only a matter of time before surrender as General Sherman mowed through Georgia. And to bring it around to our sport, it was inevitable that Ryan Dungey was going to be the 2016 450SX champion sometime around round eight in (where else?) Georgia (more specifically, Atlanta), which was the halfway point of the series. At this point he had an almost lead of almost two races in the points. The other riders saw the 'march' coming and like those confederates, they couldn't stop it.

If you're anyone other than Red Bull KTM and Dungey, this isn't a great thing. The promoters, the other riders, the fans, the media all want to see a great title fight. Knowing you had nine rounds to go after Atlanta that was worth little more than seeding behind Dungey is a tough sell for everyone. Understanding that each race is a race in itself is fine but watching a rider dominate a series, whether it's Dungey, Ryan Villopoto, Ricky Carmichael or Jeremy McGrath isn't always a great thing for the interest of the series or in the 'tickets sold' department. In the last twenty-six years of the sport, only five times has the race for the title come down to the last fixture of the year. That's simply not enough.

So with this knowledge, it's no secret the folks at Feld Entertainment who promote the champion-ship are looking at implementing a Chase-style format or playoff format for next year's series. It's not a lock that it's going to happen but it seems to be gaining momentum behind the scenes pending the AMA/FIM approving it.

Basically it's rumored that it would work like this: the first twelve rounds will be about seeding to get into the Chase for the title. I've heard the top ten in the points will have this chance for the championship. As well as that group, if you have a race win but aren't in the top ten then you get in as well.

There will be a handicap for the rider leading the points after twelve rounds and so on down. So if Dungey is in first place after twelve rounds he'll get a bonus for that as well as a bonus for individual race wins. So it's not everyone starting at zero, you'll gather points for your efforts over the twelve weeks and then it's all-out for the last five to determine the 450SX supercross champion.

Each race of the Chase will be 'a race within a race' with riders out of the title fight still going for points in the overall standings and bonus money and the riders in the Chase fighting for every single point. The outcry by fans at the rumours of this format may be coming in loudly but if you look at any motorsport or stick and ball sport, they change formats and rules year-to-year...but not in our sport. It's 25 points for a win, 22 for second, etc, a rider qualifies for the main out of a heat, every main is 20 laps and so on and so on. Change is a good thing and whether it's rules, a new website or whatever complaints dwindle over time as people get used to something different.

The Feld guys have used this format in the AM-SOIL Arenacross for a number of years and the rider leading at the end of the "regular season" has only lost the title once and that was when Zach Ames lost to Tyler Bowers but Bowers was



a multi-time champion and had been hurt a bit before the points were reset. In effect, he was the best rider in the series without a doubt.

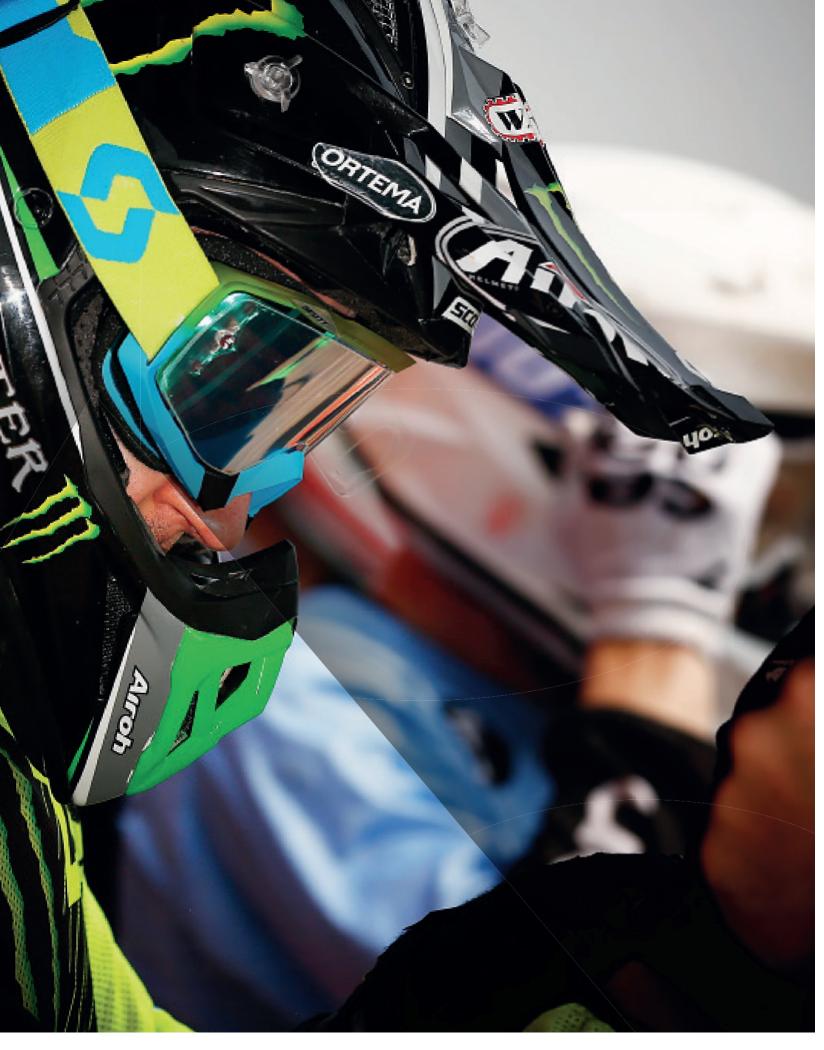
We ran the numbers for the last six years of 450SX using a seven race "chase" as opposed to the five that's rumored and the only rider that didn't win the 450SX title that was leading was Ryan Villopoto in 2012 when he blew out his knee in Seattle and missed the last two races. Justin Brayton, then on a factory Honda, would've been the 450SX champion.

In case you couldn't tell, I'm in favour of this change. In fact I'm in favour of any change in the series because we've been stagnant for way too long. If I could wave a magic wand I would also revise the points structure, I would have some races with a couple of 10 lap mains, I would give out points for qualifying and holeshots and I would bring the riders back out onto the floor for a clutch of two lap bracket races where you would also get points.

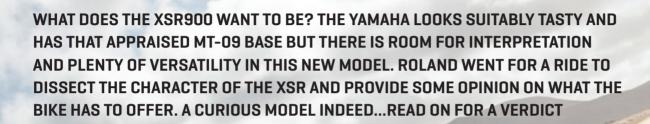
With the average ticket price being close to \$100 to see a supercross race I think you need to bring up the intensity of the series and as well showcase the top riders more during the night, which the bracket races would do. I know some of the teams and riders may not agree and that's fine, I was once wrapped into this world of working for a team and being unable to see past your nose. The big picture is we're entertainment nowadays [especially with increased TV coverage? – ED] and we need to deliver more of that to our fans. And this chase format, if it goes through, is a big step forward in my mind.







§*scott*



SIMESIER

By Roland Brown, Photos by Jonathan Godin & Matthijs van Roon



TEST

erhaps the XSR900's considerable appeal is best summed up by the difficulty in deciding what type of bike it is. For some riders the triple is a retro styled roadster, best ridden in an open-face helmet and brown leather jacket. But to those wearing a full-face lid, perhaps even knee-sliders too, it's a supernaked hooligan machine – especially when it's in the yellow, speedblock-liveried paint scheme that brings to mind Yamaha's Seventies racing exploits.

Some cynics might wonder whether the XSR is jumping on the retro/custom bandwagon. What's not in doubt is that it's a very quick and entertaining bike. Which is no surprise, given that it's heavily based on the MT-09 whose blend of torquey 847cc motor and agile chassis heralded Yamaha's rebirth as a two-wheeled force in 2013. That MT was followed by the similarly impressive and even more successful MT-07 twin, from which was developed the retro-styled XSR700 that began Yamaha's Faster Sons family late last year.



This latest XSR has an obvious visual similarity to the smaller model, and shares its method of development because it's essentially the MT-09 with a mainly cosmetic overhaul, featuring more metal parts including a petrol tank with bolt-on aluminium side sections. The basic specification is unchanged, which in this case means a dohc, 12-valve motor that produces 113bhp at 10,000rpm, held in an aluminium frame that gains a bolt-on rear subframe to facilitate customisation.

Yamaha introduced the XSR with a classy custom triple called Faster Wasp, built by Californian ex-racer Roland Sands and bearing a distinct resemblance to the TZ750 flat-tracker on which King Kenny Roberts famously won the Indianapolis Mile in 1975. The production XSR900 can't match the Wasp's hand-built construction or exotic components but it looks stocky and aggressive. Aluminium rather than plastic is used for both mudguards, plus the big round headlight's chunky brackets, combining with details including neatly finished bolt-heads to give the feel of a thoughtfully crafted bike.



It also looks good from astride the stitched dual-seat, which at 830mm is 15mm taller than the MT-09's. The view is dominated by a simple, round black LCD instrument panel and a wide, slightly raised one-piece handlebar. As with this year's updated MT-09, the right handlebar's familiar button to select from three riding modes is joined by a new switch on the left, for the two-way adjustable traction control.

The triple is a wonderfully flexible and sweet-revving powerplant, especially in its sweet zone between about 5000 and 7000rpm. The XSR weighs 4kg more than the MT-09 due to its metal parts but it's still very light at 195kg with fuel, which contributes to its performance. It's even more wheelie-happy, because the riding position is identical except that the longer tank shifts the seat back by 5mm, putting more weight over the rear wheel.







Hard acceleration in the first two gears has the front end feeling light, if not actually reaching for the sky. Riders who don't like that can choose the traction control's No.2 setting, which cuts in to stop wheelies and also kicks in early on corner exits. The ride-by-wire throttle response has been fine-tuned. Standard riding mode works very well; the sharper A mode gives an extra kick that's occasionally fun but makes fine control more difficult.



The Yamaha runs cleanly at low revs, pulling from below 3000rpm in top gear. At the other end of the scale it's delightfully smooth as it screams towards the 11,200rpm redline, quickly reaching an indicated 135mph with a bit more to come. It slows hard and controllably, too, thanks to twin four-pot monobloc calipers, though the ABS cuts in slightly earlier than the best systems.

The XSR's lightness also benefits its chassis performance, which is just as agile and responsive as that of the MT-09. Steering geometry is identical, as is the suspension spec of 41mm upside-down forks and a near-horizontal cantilever shock, both made by Kayaba and adjustable for preload and rebound damping. Spring rates are slightly firmer at both ends, with damping increased to suit, and the forks have dual- instead of single-rate springs. The XSR carves into bends with the ability to change direction quickly and effortlessly, and to make use of its abundant ground clearance and the grip of its Bridgestone S20 tyres.

The seat is more generously padded than the MT-09's but gets slightly uncomfortable by the end of a day's riding. In other respects the XSR is respectably practical. It's impressively economical, bettering 40mpg even when ridden hard to give most riders a range approaching 150 miles. The mirrors are excellent, there's plenty of steering lock, and the new slip-assist clutch has a light lever action.

There are also more than 40 accessories to choose from, ranging from café racer inspired Ace bars, rearset footrests and aluminium seat hump to practical parts including fly-screen and canvas panniers. That gives the ability to shape it to personal preference; and without going to huge expense, because the basic XSR is well priced, costing slightly more than the MT-09 (at £7849 in the UK, or £7999 for the yellow paint option) but offering plenty in return. For those who appreciate both retro cool and red-hot modern performance it's a uniquely addictive combination.





SBK

MOTUL ITALIAN ROUND IMOLA - APRIL 30-MAY 1 - RND 5 of 13

Race one winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati Race two winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati

CHAZ DAVIES LEFT IMOLA FROTHING AFTER A WELL-RECEIVED DOUBLE WIN ON ITALIAN SOIL AND CLAIMING THAT THE UPGRADES MADE TO THE WORKS PANIGALE R HAVE ADDED A NEW COMPETITIVE EDGE TO HIS CHAMPIONSHIP PLIGHT. 35 POINTS IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DUCATI MAN AND MR CONSISTENT JONATHAN REA; GRAEME BROWN LENDS HIS THOUGHTS

AHOME COME

Blog by Graeme Brown Photos by Kawasaki/GeeBee/Ducati Corse/ Honda/Milagro/Yamaha Racing











THE LONG HAUL...

By Graeme Brown

mola: a circuit steeped in history. An organic, sinuous ribbon of tarmac that weaves it's way up and down and around the suburbs of the town. A real rider's track. That should be a recipe for close, exciting raction. Not this weekend. In reality I found the racing pretty dull.

After my previous thoughts that modern racetrack design was not best suited for close contests in the motorcycle world, my views were confounded by scenes at Imola this weekend. As with Motorland Aragon, Chaz Davies set off from the lights and was never to be seen.

You could say it was to be expected; Ducati rider wins in Ducati's back yard. Just what Dorna would want to bring in the punters. Much has been written about the change to schedule this year but so far the crowd figures don't seem to be affected much. The three day figure for this weekend was 68,227, up from 65,005 last year. In Assen the figures were down 5,000 but that was probably affected by the inclement weather. It is something to keep an eye on over the season but it would be great to see a boost to track attendance.

On the track most people in the paddock are surprised that Yamaha are not challenging for podium places. They have clearly designed and built a stunning road bike and their reentry to the WorldSBK paddock is not being treated as a side show or an after thought. Whilst Crescent Racing is technically a private team they have full support from Yamaha. So

far, however, they haven't been able to transfer the potential to results. What people may have forgotten is that Lowes started the season injured. Winter testing was therefore just really running time to get base settings. That added to the usual learning process for a team with a new machine means they have been playing catch up since the start of the year.

This weekend engineers from electronics firm Magneti Marelli visited all the teams in the paddock using their engine management system and Yamaha MotoGP engineers were seen in the Superbike team's pit box. The R1 clearly has some pace. The qualifying results in Aragon and Assen show that...but it so far isn't sustainable over a full race distance. With all new race projects the difficulty comes with marrying chassis and electronics development. When the riders give feedback it can be difficult to know whether a change to chassis set up or to the electronics strategy is the way forward. Track time on race weekends this season hasn't allowed for a measured approach and it appears that when some changes have gone in the wrong direction they then become compounded by changing the other elements in an attempt to solve the fundamental problem.

It was clear that over this weekend the Yamaha team made some progress. Alex Lowes reported a big improvement in the set up of the machine between Saturday and Sunday and felt a bit more confidence to push harder. From 13th on the grid he rode to a solid 6th place finish in race two.





Unfortunately Guintoli had a pretty big getoff on Saturday, breaking his ankle although hopes to ride in Malaysia in just over a weeks time. To engage the current much-used cliché they are moving in the right direction step-bystep. For sure there is more to come.

Personally I had a healthy weekend. Normally I am fortunate enough to be supplied with a scooter to get around at weekends. It is a little 50cc Peugeot that has been on the go for a few years but has never been registered for the road. To get around at Imola you have to go out of the paddock onto the public roads. Now, flouting the rules of the road is often seen in Italy as a sport in itself but I didn't want to take the chance of getting collared by Senor Carabinieri at the furthest point from the paddock. So it was a weekend on the hoof. With the wonders of modern technology my smart phone app could tell me that I walked 33kms come Sunday evening. For the rest of the season I would like to be carried around in a golden chariot please.







ALPINESTARS

Alpinestars recently flagged that their 'unique, class-leading Tech-Air™ airbag technology, the world's first and only independent airbag system offering full upper body protection for track and street' has reached fifteen years in development. The tech is the main reason why eagle-eyed race fans will see the likes of Marc Marquez, Jorge Lorenzo, Mayerick Vinales, Michael Van der Mark, Jonathan Rea and Eugene Laverty sporting blinking LED lights on their arms...as well as emerging from a fall normally unscathed and with a haunch. Alpinestars claims that the system has clocked nearly half a million kilometres on the road since its induction to the racing scene in 2001 and then to the street in 2014. Some key details are provided here and the Tech-Air can be easily found in Alpinestars catalogue

First Impact Protection: Using a purposed-designed and sophisticated algorithm, both Tech-AirTM Street and Race are specifically developed to provide critical airbag protection for the first impact, meaning the primary contact between the rider and the obstacles or vehicle impacted. This is critical and differentiates Tech-AirTM's capabilities from other airbag systems airbag systems, which only protect against the second impact (impact with the ground after hitting the vehicle).

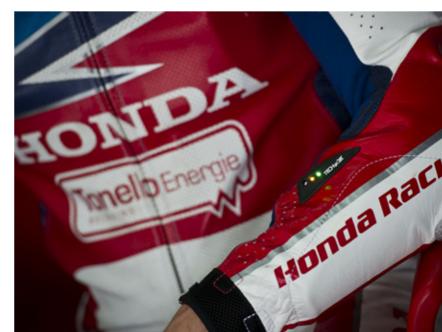
Independence: Tech-AirTM Street and Race are the world's first and only completely independent, stand-alone, full upper body airbag systems to offer such extended critical airbag protection. There are no physical nor electronic connections between rider and bike, not even a GPS is required.

Full Upper Body Protection: Both Street and Race systems incorporate the most extensive upper body coverage, covering including back, shoulders, ribs, kidney area and chest; all of the most exposed areas during a crash.

High and Lowside Protection: In November 2014, Alpinestars launched Tech-AirTM Street, which was developed to offer first-impact protection expressly in street and off-road riding situations. Using an exclusive custom analysis software specifically tailored for airbag algorithm development, Tech-AirTM Street offers the most technologically advanced airbag system, able to detect both high and lowside impacts with the greatest precision.

Performance Riding: In February of this year, Alpinestars launched the latest version of its innovative race airbag system, Tech-AirTM Race, the only system to offer first-impact and full body airbag coverage, which has a specifically and exclusively developed algorithm optimized for racing and performance riding.

Freedom to Ride: Both Tech-AirTM Street and Race offer unparalleled freedom and versatility. With no connections between bike and rider both systems are completely independent, which means a rider can have class-leading airbag protection on any motorbike, regardless of make or model. The self-contained Tech-AirTM Street system has a specifically developed algorithm which enables the system to be used in road and off-road adventure touring surfaces. Tech-AirTM Race can be used for performance track riding but also, via a system firmware swap, can be configured to run the Street settings for the ultimate in versatility.







МотоGР

RED BULL GRAN PREMIO DE

JEREZ - APRIL 24th - Rnd 4 of 18

MotoGP winner: Valentino Rossi, Yamaha Moto2 winner: Sam Lowes, Kalex Moto3 winner: Brad Binder, KTM

JEREZ AND ROUND FOUR OF MotoGP SAW VALENTINO ROSSI AT HIS MOST SURGICAL AS THE ITALIAN SWEPT AWAY ALL THE TALK AND DEBATE ABOUT HIS TEAMMATE WITH A MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE ON THE SLIPPERY SPANISH ASPHALT. THE SERIES HEADS INTO THE BIZARRE CURVES OF LE MANS THIS WEEK BUT THERE WAS PLENTY TO DIGEST FROM SPAIN AND THE FIRST EUROPEAN STOP FOR GRAND PRIX. READ THE REACTION TO BRAD BINDER'S AMAZING MOTO3 WIN, THOUGHTS ON JORGE LORENZO'S DUCATI DEFECTION, MICHELIN MUSINGS AND PLENTY MORE

RENEW EN

Photos by CormacGP www.cormacgp.com Words by Adam Wheeler



Le Mans this weekend will bring MotoGP to a track with vague similarities to Jerez almost a fortnight ago. Dani Pedrosa described the Andalucía layout as such: "It is all about braking and wheelie". 2.6 miles in length and working the right side of the tyre hard with nine turns compared to five left, Le Mans and its changeable climate is another compact and scratchy test for MotoGP and where the spotlight will be prodded more into the faces of Michelin at their home event.

Jerez was distinguishable for a number of reasons: Valentino Rossi's latest renaissance and ever slimming gap to Giacomo Agostini's towering GP win total (now just 9 in arrears), Brad Binder exceptional and staggering Moto3 flight to a maiden Grand Prix triumph in dreamlike circumstances, Sam Lowes bossing Moto2, Jorge Lorenzo's Ducati fanfare, Michelin's plight over carcass construction and Ducati-fettering that saw rear tyres smoked in earnest once more and the intensifying of gossip over who goes where for 2017 and beyond. On that last note no better place to start than in Ducati Red...

THE DUCATI QUESTION

Ducati Corse's Sporting Director Paolo Ciabatti & General Manager Gigi Dall'inga gave a one-off press conference in the paddock at Jerez to explain their move for Jorge Lorenzo for 2017 and 2018 and shed some light on how the deal came about. "From tomorrow we'd like to avoid any extra comments because obviously there are fifteen races to go and we have the objective to win this season," Ciabatti said. "Until Valencia [test] Jorge is going to be one of our toughest competitors and we'll try to beat him."

On why Lorenzo...

PC: We had a clear target at the end of 2013 and with Gigi and our owners Audi to develop a competitive bike and, once it was competitive, to be able to attract one of the top riders. With all due respect to all the other riders and including the two Andreas [Dovizioso and lannone] there are only a few able to win a championship and if you look in the last six years it was three times Lorenzo, twice [Marc] Marquez and once [Casey] Stoner. To be sure of being in a position to fight next year we had to aim for the top riders, which are Lorenzo and Marquez. For several reasons we thought there was an opportunity to find an agreement with Lorenzo while we felt the situation with Marquez was quite different. After speaking to both we decided to move ahead with Jorge.

GD: We wanted to develop the bike. And then when it was at the level of the other manufacturers we would like to reach an agreement with one of the best riders on the grid. This was our target from the beginning.







On Dall'Inga's role and talent...

GD: I think I can help all the people that work with me to give the best of their job. I'm surrounded by genius and not only the technical staff but all the Ducati people that are at a high level. I think the job we did in the last three years is because we are a real group that work together with a target to 'achieve' and that is why we have been able to evolve the bike.

On Lorenzo's number one status...

GD: In my career I did not want to give the opportunity to just one rider to win the championship. Above all, from the beginning of the season, I have to give the best possible material to both of my riders.

On Lorenzo being able to bring people into the team...

PC: Any rider at the level of Jorge would like to have some of his people with him when he moves team, however it was not one of the main topics discussed. It is still open. We want to make Jorge comfortable but we also think we have good people in our team now. We know very well our working method and the bike and [his people] have been working on a different bike for many years. It is something we will discuss in the future.

On how Lorenzo will find and be able to adapt to the Ducati...

GD: Sometimes I read in the papers that Ducati cannot win races because of the riders. I don't want this excuse. It is simple. Jorge, for sure, is one of the best riders in the world and he has some special characteristics that I know well because I worked with him for a long time [in their years together at Aprilia]. I think I can give what Jorge needs to be fast on the race track. For sure we will need to adapt the bike a little bit to his riding style but I am sure he can ride it in the proper way because he is a real genius. At the moment I think our bike is quite good for him. We have some evolution in mind for this season and next year and I think as soon as possible after the Valencia race we will provide for him the 2017 bike that we are

working on now in Ducati. So I am quite convinced we will not need too many evolutions just for him.

On how the deal came together...

PC: Without going into too much detail there was contact going for some time but things became a bit more interesting around Qatar and around that time Yamaha had announced their agreement with Valentino Rossi. At that time we thought there was the chance to make a serious approach. We felt there was a more favourable situation for many reasons with Jorge than with Marc. Honda – with respect to Dani – is currently counting very much on Marc to win races and to be challenging for the championship and for them we felt it was a 'must' that they need to keep Marc and with Yamaha already announcing we managed to finally close the deal.

On what the situation means for the Andreas and whether the second saddle could see the likes of Scott Redding in the frame...

PC: The agreement came quite early in the season but when you have the opportunity to sign one of the top riders then you must take that chance. We worked quite hard to find an agreement, which we did eventually. The rumours were already spreading in the paddock after our first conversation and it was a rumour that our riders were listening [sic] like everybody else. We spoke to them about it. There is room for only one more rider. We obviously decided to keep the situation open for some time and we are not really in a hurry to decide who will be Lorenzo's teammate next year. I think it will be important to keep one of our two current riders; don't forget that both of the Andreas have been with Ducati MotoGP since 2013 and we have done a lot of development work together. We think ideally - if possible - we would like to re-take one of the two riders. Having said so, Scott is a Ducati rider and is under contract with us and we look with a lot of interest to his performance. He is having a good season.



On what Lorenzo will find at Ducati...

PC: Ducati is a special company. We are quite small in size and last year we produced just over 54,000 bikes and we are focussed very much on performance, racing and passion. All the people at Ducati share the same passion. This feeling of passion that surrounds all of what Ducati does will be something that Jorge will appreciate very much. The 'Ducatisti' are cheering for the brand more than the riders in principal but the riders that achieved exceptional results for Ducati became heroes like Fogarty, Bayliss and Stoner. The opportunity for a rider like Jorge to become a symbol and hero for a company like Ducati is maybe one of the reasons he thought it was time to make a change in his career.



Lorenzo himself spoke in the official press conference and talked about arguably the highest-profile change at the top since Casey Stoner's switch to Repsol Honda and the most surprising since rumours floated that Valentino Rossi would make his own switch from blue to red in 2010...here is a selection of this comments:

Lorenzo: It has been one of the biggest decisions of my life and career but at the moment it is still very far away. I have all my attention and focus on the present. I am thinking in blue and will be trying to win the championship. The ideal thing will be to try and sort these kinds of things in the middle of the year but now my future is solved. To not have your mind focussed [when you are] on a MotoGP bike can be dangerous. Right now I feel we have a higher potential than last year to win races.

Lorenzo: There are many reasons but my biggest one was motivation and the challenge to try and win with another bike. The challenge for me after so many years in the world championship and in MotoGP is to give my maximum effort every day – that is what I try to do and I think I am one of the most professional riders. My focus on my work is 100%, it is complete. I felt that I need this new challenge to get my motivationand work as hard as I have done until now.

Lorenzo: I think I will be very fast on the straight!

Lorenzo: I was never worried about being the number one or number two [at Ducati]. For me it was always enough to have exactly the same cards, or tools, as my partner. I believed in my potential and that was enough. Yamaha relied on four riders to develop the bike and maybe in the future I will have more power to create the bike I want to ride. Or they will give more focus on more.

Lorenzo: Without Yamaha I would not be a three time champion of MotoGP so I want to be very grateful to them because they mean a lot to me. They did what they felt, I did what I felt. I always felt very protected by Yamaha. To change is because I want to meet the big challenge in my head and get the full motivation to wake in the morning and work as much as possible and more than ever.

Lorenzo: It was my romantic idea to keep all my career with Yamaha but it was not possible and if I change [then] it is to retire with the team I change to; that's my idea...but it is also still far away.

Lorenzo: The fans of the [Ducati] brand are very faithful and feel like a family. I don't think the other brands have something quite like that. I believe that in life you have to try and make history.



With names like Dovizoso, Petrucci, Iannone, Barbera and Hernandez all familiar with the Desmosedici and models from the 14.1 onwards we picked one of the newbies on the Ducati for an opinion regarding the DNA of a bike that Lorenzo might find. "I think it will be guite difficult for him because of his riding style," said Octo Pramac's Scott Redding. "He is a high calibre rider and a multi world champion in different categories so he will adapt but I think it will take a bit of time. With the Yamaha he is very smooth and in one line. With the Ducati it is not so precise and it takes a bit more power to work with the bike. It will be interesting to see! The only bad thing about the move is that there is one less space for me! And I want a factory bike next year and have to prove that I am able to do it."

Question marks now hang over the luckless Dovizioso and the still-raw lannone and it's anybody's bet who Ducati could retain for 2017. Dovi seemed to hint that his development work in red is worth remembering. "Ducati has become strong and I'm happy about that because it means in the last four years we have done a good job," the 30 year old said. "There is a chance to bring a world champion into Ducati next year and that's really positive. All the big riders are almost fixed and now it is almost time to speak for the future. Like I have said in some interviews I am quite relaxed because the speed is there and pre-season is completely different to how we finished last year. The bike is good and the relation is good with Ducati this year."

Valentino Rossi's input was also curious considering that he was the forerunner for Lorenzo's Yamaha-Ducati jump. Although 46 did state that the circumstances are somewhat different. "It is about the timing," he opined. "I was older [than Lorenzo] but it is a similar moment in terms of career. It looks like the Ducati has improved a lot in the last two years. For sure it is different to Yamaha but I know the skills of Lorenzo and I think he will be competitive."

"When I arrived to Ducati it was different to all the other bikes because it was another concept," he continued. "In the next years Ducati decided to go another way and follow other bikes and chassis that was the right idea...if you see their performance now."



"Always at Yamaha we were on the same level; 50-50," he adds. "It is the key to make the teamwork so I don't think [he left] for this reason."

Cal Crutchlow had a single season taste of the Desmo. "Last year it was a proper motorcycle again; that's not to say mine wasn't but what I finished the year with is what I started with," he said when asked to reflect on his 2014 term in comparison. "Mine was the 13.9 or something. Now, I think they give away a little in straight line braking but the way they turn and the corner speed they give and the way the engine is managed by the electronics then it is better than the rest. I think they have a base now that works quite well everywhere. They have a good group of staff, people and resources."

Elsewhere the news made for an easy topic of conversation. "I was surprised," said Dani Pedrosa. "It is a big change and it very early. He has his reasons but there is still a long way until he changes. I think the Ducati is better now than before."

"At the end of the day it will be great for the sport and the fans and MotoGP," Crutchlow added. "It is good to see something different; maybe he will run away with the championship or maybe he will finish tenth. I think Vale's comment about 'having balls' was perfect for Vale and perfect for Jorge because he went; what has happened is better for all parties. He's getting a few pesos and definitely will be able to have a meal at night. So why not? The bike is a rocket and no disrespect to the riders there now but he is better than them. It is a difficult bike to learn to ride, when you get it right then it's fantastic. It is a good bike and a good team."

The Lorenzo deal coming early does mean that contract situations for the rest of the paddock have also sped up. "We thought it would be around the time of Mugello but guys are signing contracts now and that doesn't leave me a lot of time to show what I can do," mused Redding. "If it doesn't come off then I will have to do another year with the satellite bike...but maybe they [Ducati] can give me something to bring me that little bit closer."

Crutchlow was less worried over the timing: "The people in the paddock know what people are capable of, in my opinion. I don't believe it makes much difference whether it happened now or in October... it does mean that you don't have anything to write about now at mid-season!"

One of those at the top of the soup bowl (and keeping journalist's fingers busy) is Maverick Viñales and where the current Suzuki rider goes should start the 2017 roll. "I always go with what my head says," the Spaniard coyly admitted at Jerez and when it was put to the 21 year old that he faces a choice between Yamaha, Suzuki and maybe Honda. "It is something incredible and I'd dream of having these options when I was a kid. For sure Suzuki is a really nice team but we need the results there; if we don't have the results then maybe it is a mistake. I think being at Yamaha can make a lot of sense; being beside Valentino could be very important for my career and on a bike that is already near the top."

Yamaha Racing's MD, Lin Jarvis, gave an eloquent account of the saga from Yamaha's perspective in the official Jerez pre-event press conference and was also pushed on the proximity of Viñales chang-

ing his hue of blue. "Maverick has proven that he is one of the future talents of MotoGP and he has a good chance to be world champion in the future," he stated. "He is an attractive rider. There are other options we have as well, other riders with different profiles. Things are never as straightforward and simple as they seem and a lot of fans think that is a very simple thing and sometimes even the media but behind the scenes it is complicated and there are lots of issues we have to take into consideration. We are busy now to look at all the candidates. We have a really good bike and a really good team so I think we have an attractive package on offer."

"At this moment he is very close but at this moment, realistically, we are in discussion with the managers of many riders," he swerved. "It would be too premature to say if we are close or not. We have expressed our interest and there is an ongoing discussion."

Jarvis did say that he had not consulted with Rossi over a potential teammate and the Italian himself was publicly dismissive of any preference: "They have some good possibilities and young riders with a bright future. There are also some really top riders; for me I am open to everybody."

One of the 'young names' is Moto2 star Alex Rins who, after finishing third on Sunday for his second podium result of the season admitted: "It can be difficult to keep concentration when the 'big people' are talking about you. I have really good people around me and that helps to be calm."

Rins could be vying with his fellow Catalan for the Yamaha saddle but another from the same region of Spain was content to beat Viñales at Jerez and elevate his own status when it comes to discussions on the future. Aleix Esparagaro was clearly pleased to grab fifth for the second race in a row and be the top Suzuki runner. "It was important because Maverick has had an unbelievable beginning of the season and everyone wants him in this paddock," Aleix remarked. "I know he is really talented because I see his data. We have both crashed once each and we are still one point from each other in the championship so it means we are doing a good job. He is a good guy, he came over to say 'good job' after the race. Suzuki is making progress and

have never been so close to Honda and Yamaha. They have two very hungry, professional and hardworking riders. The atmosphere here is fantastic right now."



It seems commonly accepted that Marc Marquez will stay HRC but it would seem that the jury is still out on whether Dani Pedrosa will maintain a career-long stint as a Honda racer. Espargaro (Pol or Aleix), Viñales and Rins would satisfy Repsol's Iberian focus (although with Marquez they already have their figure) and it also comes down to the thirty year old who won two of the last four races of 2015 but has been wearing a pained expression so far in his bid to get the best of the RCV.

"My objective is to have the best possibilities to win the world championship, this is the only wish I have," he said in Spanish during his Thursday debrief. "Wherever this takes me...it is my dream. I'm in one of the best teams in the world but maybe I don't have the best in the world but I'm making the best of it I can. Not all situations are ideal but things can change tomorrow and everything can start going really well. With the rules you are limited with the changes, for instance with what we can do with the engine, and there is limited time in practice and the test days. You really have to use the test days well."





WINGING IT A BIT MORE

Testing involved a busy Monday after Jerez for most, but the teams were already experimenting through the Grand Prix weekend and extended winglets (rumoured to be on the fringe of being clipped altogether for 2017) popped up on factory Aprilia, Honda and Suzuki machinery. Again the riders – those new to the aerodynamic protrusions – were quizzed.

"The biggest difference I felt was coming out of the fast corner onto the back straight," said Alvaro Bautista on the RS-GP. "Normally it is a bit unstable and with more wheelie but with the wings there was more stability and less wheelie; so you could use more power."

The Spaniard also said he was pleased with the work and direction of MotoGP's newest racebike. "I'm surprised! After the IRTA test at Qatar then you would think that we would not finish one race! After this we never found a problem with the bike, which means it is consistent. Right now we don't have new parts and we are just working on set-up. We still need to make more kilometres and understand the bike more to go faster. We have been working mainly on the base setting."

Back to the wings though and how the modifications helped the all-action style of Marc Marquez was fascinating if somewhat inconclusive at this early stage. "We cannot see a clear improvement with the data," he confessed. "For riding also it is difficult [to see]. We will keep them and try to understand more because the others are using it. Maybe with the bigger wings the front is more stable but we have to be careful because sometimes the front is pushing too much in the corners. It is not clear at the moment but I want to know more. We are trying it to attempt to limit effects under acceleration and improve the contact patch further with the front."

Development on fairing wings could be a fruit-less pursuit as there is a movement to quell the abnormalities of race bikes in MotoGP, largely on grounds of safety. "If enough riders complain about buffeting and being hit by them then it becomes a safety issue," said Bradley Smith. "I don't think we are reliant on them. I don't think anyone will be in uproar [if they were banned]. It is all about allowing the rider not to have to hit the rear brake or roll off the throttle and might work in one part of the race-track; that's my honest feeling. They don't look that pretty anyway."



CAN MICHELIN QUELL GRUMBLES AT HOME GP?

A slick track and variations in temperature (raceday was blighted by early morning fog and then the hottest sunshine through the four days) meant that Michelin's rubber came in the firing line across the board for wheelspin, a general lack of grip and even faltering performance in Spain. It was a tough ask for the French firm (half of the technical crew were also hit by a stomach virus that caused a race delay) and almost every rider seemed to have a tale of woe as both Michelin, the teams and the championship itself wades through this first early teething period of a new control tyre era. Shaking his head in Parc Ferme after a brief snipe at Rossi's lead was Jorge Lorenzo, who was generally mystified why he could not challenge further at a track where he had conguered five times previously.

"With the tyres on front and rear I was not as fast as Rossi and I was starting to spin on the straight," he said. "Anyway I was catching him when this thing [wheelspin] happened more and I had to slow, be easy on the throttle in every gear on the straights and I couldn't go for the win. A pity; Marc had more difficulties than us but we could not take profit of that. We recovered points so the result is good for the championship but I am frustrated about the rear tyre."

Redding, already a victim of a delaminating tyre in Argentina and a catalyst for Michelin to review their construction and offerings, finished last and got to the point where frustration had ebbed into almost comical acceptance. His weekend was long. Sunday saw the Pramac rider barely in touch with the pack and even gliding into Loris Baz at one point. He was already struggling on Friday. "I don't know what to say and where to go; just no grip whatsoever," he said. "Two different tyres and I don't know which way to go. FP4 was the worst session I have had this year I'm just spinning,

spinning, spinning. They [the factory guys] don't seem to be in a better position and the Ducatis all seem to be struggling. As the track temperature gets hotter then it gets worse. Normally we would try 2-3 things on a weekend but this time it was 8-10. It is hard enough to put a set-up together as it is."

"The character of the tyre here is to spin," said Smith after a frustrating twelfth place. "You just have to look at the track, there are black lines everywhere. We keep on requesting [new asphalt] but a lot is the nature of the tyre because it does spin more than the Bridgestone."

"You are always sliding on entry and exit," said Aspar's Eugene Laverty who finished a decent ninth in the race and second best Ducati, pointing more towards the nature of Jerez. "It is a strange one. It is grippy in the wet but slick in the dry once you get to that forty degrees cut off point."

"You need to ride much more swooping lines with these Michelins and Marc has just figured it out," mooted Crutchlow, after his first points of the season in eleventh. "All my crashes have been on the front because we are pushing there quite a lot. My asset over the years has been corner speed. When I rode the Ducati they said to me "you'll never go around the corner at that speed" and I did the whole year; it was with the braking I was losing. Now it is the complete opposite. I have learned to ride the Honda last year under hard braking. You need to do both...and find that balance. We are using the rear brake like you wouldn't believe to try and get some load on the rear of the bike to push the tyre into the floor. Just trying to search for grip."

"Manage the front as much as possible and handle the rear with the right hand," underlined Smith. Marquez is going through a period of evolution and Jerez was another step on that ladder. "The problem is that we are losing on acceleration so we try to win on braking and change the braking point," he reveals. "To do that later you need to change the riding style a little bit. I try to slide with the rear wheel but not a lot otherwise I am going wide. I always try to adjust with the body and the front wheel to not slide much...but still brake late!"

"Last year, if you look, we complained a lot here for rear grip with the Bridgestone and with Michelin we are also struggling but we expected this," he adds. "When I was testing here it was the same. I think it is more about the track than the tyres and it is completely different to Austin. We are trying to find a base for the European tracks. The track here is narrower and you can change the line but not much...until now I am using the 2015 style too much and if I brake too much and too late then I don't think this is the best way for the Michelin tyre."

Rossi was one of those that – obviously - overseeing the situation best and his experience and memory-recall with Michelins from the 2001-2007 glory years was an asset. "Jerez is a track that I like a lot and in the Michelin era I was always very fast but struggled with the Bridgestones," he claimed. "I did some good races but didn't feel strong enough. It looks like I am stronger and faster in qualifying this year and this was a weak point in 2015."

Aleix Espargaro was also buoyant and explained what it was like to follow and observe some of the others. "I'm really happy and we worked really hard all weekend and always with the hard tyre," he beamed. "Everybody knows that in Jerez, after the Moto2 and with the high temperatures, it is so slippery. We are stronger in the fast corners, have good traction and we are close with the engine...we just have one problem – that we saw in America and also here – in that we lack grip in the slow corners. When we stop the bike and then touch

the throttle then our bike spins immediately and we lose a lot in acceleration; it is something mechanical for sure. We have some good ideas to try because obviously Le Mans is the most demanding track in this area. The Honda spins a lot in the fast corners, much more than me. I was able to overtake Dovizioso near the beginning because I had good grip in the fast corners. I saw Dani quick-shifting after some slow corners so I think everyone had problems."

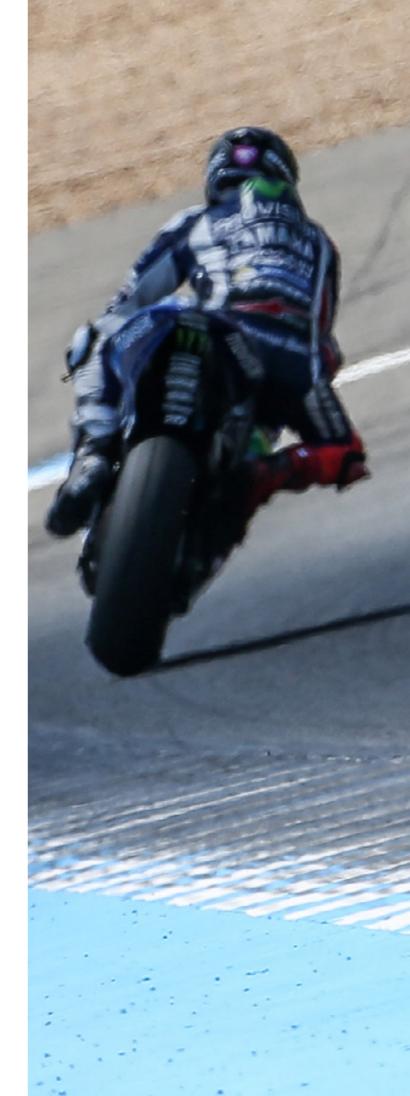


Crutchlow was quite damning of some of his peers when it came to tyre treatment and preservation. "Honestly, some of these guys on the grid in front of me...the way they ride the bike and the throttle traces: they go from zero to 100% with massive traction control. The smoke coming off those tyres is out of control! They wonder why they can be so strong in practice and qualifying and then nowhere in the race because they don't save the tyre."

The Englishman also gave some insight into just how MotoGP teams and technicians are having to adapt under the 2016 rules and regs. "Honda are understanding the electronics a lot more and are doing a good job with that," the LCR man said. "Changing things takes so long though. You cannot do things in sessions any more. Last year I used to walk in the garage and say "I need less engine braking in turn 9" and bam! It was done before I got back on the bike. Now it takes such a long, long time. We think Ducati are the only ones that can do it fast; it is already set and pre-loaded like a template."

Viñales smirked as he said that the luck of the draw with the Michelins could also be a factor in race performance. "I was struggling a lot with rear grip and sliding all the time. We might see some surprises soon because with the Michelin you might find some tyre that is really good! If I can get grip on the rear then I feel good to use the full potential of the bike."

Lastly Smith hinted that the nature of the curving and compact Jerez layout was also a factor in the general malaise on Sunday and after the horsepower hike that was Austin two weeks beforehand. "You spend a lot of time always turning," he described. "You never really pick up the bike straight because when you do that the centre of gravity is nice and high so that it loads the tyre and forces it into the ground. When you are constantly having to turn and turn then you are never on top of the tyre. So you have to find a setting that loads the tyre enough while you are off the side of the bike: it is one big puzzle."











BACKING-IT IN...

Sam Lowes left little doubt over his championship credentials in Moto2 at Jerez with a dominant outing across most of the weekend. The standings leader had a crash in a chilly morning warm-up but was otherwise the 'standout' on the Federal Oil Gresini Kalex as the UK seeks a second title in two years (Danny Kent continues to struggle in his first year back in the 600 formula). Here is what the 25 year old had to say after his second career win in just his third season in Grand Prix...

On the arrival to Jerez...

I had a lot of confidence coming here after the test and it was important to come as championship leader and be fast and strong. I feel good. To come from fifteenth place in Moto2 is not easy [in reference to rival Johan Zarco's qualification]. Moto2 is a tough class and you never know until you get off the start and see. I need to use my head and be clever. I came here off [the back of] two second places and two strong rides in Argentina and Austin. I feel a lot more relaxed this year and that I can take my time a bit; I'm not too edgy at the start which is a big positive because I don't get tired on the bike and over the race distance. I came here to win and did that. I'm leading the championship but wanted a win and now want to kick-on in Le Mans.

On his bumpy start to Sunday...

I was really lucky because I crashed at that Turn7 in the test and I think the bike was in about three pieces! I crashed today and it was quite fast but I saw the marshal pushing it and thought 'I can get back on that'. Luckily I managed to get a lap in at the end of the session and it took away that doubt. I got back out on track and felt good.

On Marc Marquez admiring his rear sliding technique to enter turns...

If you look at the way he rides the bike is fantastic and the way he slides into corners is impressive. Maybe my style is a bit similar to that. I use it to help me stop. I feel strong on the brakes and on the last corner I'm a bit crazy but then I'm fast in the last split. There are Pros and Cons to every style.

On savouring the success...

It is only my second win in Grand Prix and last year I was able to follow Zarco until about three or four laps before the end and it was easy to keep concentration. So this was a big test. I led a lot of the race in Argentina, which gave me a lot of experience. I focussed on the lap-time and kept consistent. It is something I can put in the pocket and call on again. I went to bed the night before Qatar thinking that I had a really good chance but I went a bit early at the start! Today I just knew it. This is what I want to do. I came into this paddock two years ago to fight to win the championship or be a guy that someone looked to be at the top. I want to show that over the whole season and it makes a massive difference to go to MotoGP with a solid season behind me; not just for my confidence and for the team but also for the way I am perceived I this paddock. I am relatively new here so this is a nice feeling for me. I love that feeling of being at the front and during the sessions I like to be alone and at the top. If you are not careful then you can get some pressure and nerves but I like it.

On thriving in Moto2...

I know who my rivals are and I also know if I work well with the team then I can beat those guys. I won't say it will happen every weekend but when it goes well...in this class you have to be consistent. I respect everybody in this field because I know we could go to Le Mans and there could be five or six guys ahead of me and I have to break my balls just to be there. I think Moto2 is the only place to be on order to get to MotoGP and people like Johann are being talked about for next year and that's why you have to be here.

On why there were a lot of crashes in the Moto2 race...

Normally we always test here in the winter and the lap-times are incredible. This weekend was a long way off that. For me in the race my bike was quite good towards the end when there was not much fuel but I was losing the front in the corners. You use quite a lot of fuel at this track and the bike changes quite a lot. With the grip getting less and the track getting hotter it made a few people lose the front.

On his first taste of MotoGP at the end of June with a first test with the Aprilia...

I'll have to adapt my style and many things – like corner entry – but getting into MotoGP is the aim and Aprilia are doing great with their new project already. It will be fantastic to be a part of it.

On the British title revival and coping with the weight of expectation...

It was mega for Danny to get the championship last year and I think we have a lot of talent. It is tough. This is the top-of-the-top and it is really hard to get here. You see many [riders] from Spain and Italy just as talented but maybe had the chance a bit younger. We need more [British riders]...so we'd better get more wins! For me it is fantastic [starting as the favourite] because it is the biggest compliment this paddock can give me. I came here two years ago as World Supersport Champion and half the people did not know who I was... and now they are expecting me to win a race. It is pressure but everyone on the grid has pressure because they want to do the best job that they can. It is the pressure that I want. I want people to talk about me in that I way. I want to continue to improve and I will make mistakes but if I grow as a rider then hopefully they will talk about me a lot more in that way! My dream is to be here, to try and win races and this year and fight for the Moto2 Championship. In MotoGP I want to see what I can do: I really don't need any more motivation.









BLINDER!



Not bad for a first Grand Prix win and the first for South Africa in three decades. Red Bull KTM's Brad Binder blitzed Moto3 from the back of the grid after a technical infringement (still not fully explained by KTM) and with brave passing, a high rhythm and a large dose of willpower. Pole sitter Nicolo Bulega made the box for his first podium after just five GPs and Pecco Bagnaia bagged a trophy for Mahindra in third ("we made a big step this weekend") as Moto3 was again the best spectacle on track.

"We are all very happy about Nicolo because he was our gamble three years ago," grinned Valentino Rossi of his teenage VR46 recruit. "We decided to take him and help him and move to Spain to do the CEV [national championship]. We know that he has great talent but to make Pole Position after four races is something special.

Binder was the main man however. The twenty year old took six podiums in two years, 2014 with Mahindra and then KTM in 2015, but captured his first top step in some style. Here is what he said...

"I think I slept for about three hours last night! I was quite worried because I didn't know what was happening [on the penalty] and found out yesterday that there was a chance I might have to start last. I actually found out as I was putting my leathers on for the race that I would be last."

"I knew – with the rhythm I had – I could still fight for a podium. I was quite surprised because I pushed so hard at the beginning and when I arrived to the [lead] group I followed them for three laps to see their pace and realised I had a good half-a-second still in my pocket. I waited until five laps to go and then put my head down and tried to disappear. Today is a great day for me and for my country and I cannot thank my team enough."

"Starting last makes this even sweeter. On the last lap I had the feeling that I had forgotten something; I don't think it has sunk in yet!"



ROSSI CHATS ABOUT EMPHATIC 113TH GP WIN

Sunshine was not the only blinding element of the fourth MotoGP fixture of the season. Valentino Rossi led all twenty-seven laps of an event that the thirty-seven year old icon first conquered twenty years previously. It was a triumph that planted his world championship bid back on track after [surprisingly] tumbling out of the Grand Prix of Americas two weeks beforehand. '46' conserved his tyres to toast a popular success; his first of 2016 and since Silverstone in the UK last summer. Here are some of his comments and reaction immediately after...

On managing Michelin rubber on the slippery Jerez asphalt by learning from Austin...

"I crashed in Austin because I made a mistake at the start with the clutch and also because I did two races with a tyre that was not good for my bike. It was the only way...because the right rubber to finish the race was from that construction. We knew it was a risk but with the tyre Marquez used we would not have finished, with the other we would have been two seconds slower."

On tasting victory once more...

"My last victory was at Silverstone last year and then after that Marquez won, Lorenzo won and Pedrosa won. Today it was my turn. What I lost in 2015 was the number of laps at the front. I won four races but normally on the last laps...so these 27 were important. Lorenzo is very strong in Jerez so to arrive in front of him is important...and it came at the right moment. Races have a different story week-byweek. My experience teaches me to be happy and enjoy the taste of victory now. Maybe in ten days everything is different."

On fancying his chances at Jerez...

"At home before coming here I had in my mind that I can be very strong at Jerez; it was a hope rather than a prediction. My mechanic said to me on the grid "first to the corner and first to the last" and thought 'OK, why not?'. I felt really good with the Michelin in Jerez. It was important to be strong at the beginning of Europe if you want to fight for the champion-ship."

On the mental and physical difference of winning at Jerez twenty years later...

"It is more difficult. It is more effort, more training but I think you can ride MotoGP to a minimum of forty years. The difference is the motivation and what you feel; if you want to try to win and try to continue. It is more difficult for sure because twenty years ago it was easier to do everything, but, I feel not so bad."

On his work with former world champion Luca Cadalora...

"Is very important because he is a man with great passion but also great experience. During the weekend we work close together and he can give me a lot of advice of small things on the track and also help to set the bike. I am very happy that this is the first victory from the coach's side."

On eyeing Giacomo Agostini's Grand Prix win total of 122...

"It is better we do not speak about Agostini's record; it is so far!"



RUBBER STAMPED?

By David Emmett

races in and how should we judge how Michelin have handled their return to MotoGP so far? That all depends on your perspective, I suppose, but more than that, it depends on your expectations. If you believed that Michelin had a duty to replicate what Bridgestone had done, you will be sorely disappointed. If you feared that the level of MotoGP had moved on so far that Michelin would not be up to the job, you will be pleasantly surprised. And depending upon which rider you happen to speak to, and after which particular race, you will hear comments to either support or contradict both sides of that argument.

The problem is that tyres are both incredibly complex and at the very centre of a motorcycle's performance. Tyres are the single biggest determining factor for a fast lap time, and managing tyres is the biggest step towards achieving strong results. All of the horsepower in the world is no good if you can't actually convert it into forward motion. Doing that requires finding the optimum balance between drive and wheelspin, which in turn needs a perfect balancing act, getting the weight of bike and rider distributed perfectly between front and rear wheels. Then there are the electronics to manage both the power delivery and tyre degradation, suspension settings to manage the contact between tyre and asphalt, and much, much more.

What does all this mean? It means that felling a definitive judgement on how Michelin have done so far is much more difficult than it seems. At Qatar, lap records were smashed and most riders were happy. In Argentina, Scott Redding's rear tyre delaminated without warning, panicking the organisers and Michelin into taking extraordinary measures, splitting the race into two with a compulsory pit stop, and introducing a new construction of rear tyre – more rigid, and so generating less heat in the carcass – for the following races. At Austin, the complaints were about the front tyre, with six of

the twenty-one riders losing the front (technically, it was five of the twenty-one, as Andrea Dovizioso was taken out by Dani Pedrosa. That too may be categorised as a front-end crash, only it wasn't Dovizioso's front end that was the problem...). Back in Europe, riders were complaining about the rear Michelin again, saying it was spinning up even along the straight in fourth, fifth and sixth gear.

Listed starkly like that, it sounds like a catalogue of disaster. Yet the problem does not lie with Michelin alone. After seven years spent honing the set up of their bikes for the Bridgestones - a miraculously sturdy and sticky front tyre, and a rear that was passable at best - the teams now have to deal with rubber which are entirely different in their philosophy. The rear has masses of grip (well, until the safety tyre was introduced at Austin), and the front is much more critical. The teams have spent the winter and the first few races turning their set ups upside down to try to get the best out of the Michelins, while the riders are struggling to get their heads around the different feel of the tyres, especially at the front. The factories are just starting to bring parts to tests designed specifically around the data gathered so far this year. Where that is concerned, the Jerez post-race test was absolutely invaluable, with teams finally having time to run through all the various options they had jotted down in their notebooks.

The elephant in the room is electronics, though. The factory systems of the past were incredibly sophisticated, not just in terms of their ability to control grip, but above all, in their management of tyre wear and degradation. Yamaha's electronics were probably the most so. They did not just measure tyre degradation during each lap but automatically adjust traction control and engine management to save the tyres as much as possible. They also used an internal model to predict the rate of tyre wear over the coming laps, and pre-emptively adjust the



electronics to best match expected tyre degradation. The ECU was optimising its own algorithms lap by lap, to extract the very last ounce of performance from the tyres.

That level of sophistication is now gone. The electronics are still powerful – traction control and engine braking are still set up differently for each corner, and the bikes still have launch control, wheelie control and highly configurable torque maps – but there is much less automatic control. Each rider will be sent out with two torque maps, two or three traction control settings and two or three engine braking settings. They will have to switch those manually as tyres wear out and grip drops. But this means for most of the race, the electronics will not be perfectly matched to the current state of the tyre and said tyres take a battering from an excessively aggressive power delivery and a little more engine braking than they can handle.

Of course, Michelin had a year to prepare for MotoGP, having run tests at almost every circuit. But testing isn't racing, and test riders are simply not as fast as riders who are still competing, nor do they stress the tyres as much. If they were, they would still be racing (apart from Casey Stoner, of course, but that's another question altogether). Test riders don't provide the same level of feedback as racers, because they are not asking as much of their tyres. A test rider will try to get to the limit of their performance every lap. In a race, riders are pushing past the limits, exploring just how much punishment the tyres will take before crying halt, in a desperate attempt to get ahead of the bastard in front of them. Adrenaline and ambition load tyres far more than concentration and hard work ever will.

How should we judge Michelin's first year back in the premier class of motorcycle racing? There have been some obvious and abject failures, such as Scott Redding's tyre at Argentina. The overreaction to that, introducing a tyre which is really too hard for everyone who isn't 80+kg on a bike with less than 270hp, has been too much of a knee jerk, with not enough time to sit down and analyse the causes properly and determine the appropriate cause of action. But Michelin have also made incredible progress: at the Valencia test, everyone but Dani Pedrosa and Bradley Smith crashed by losing the front. By the time we got to the Jerez race, the front Michelin had improved so much that there were just two crashes all weekend. The tyres have occasionally been terrible, but they have also sometimes been brilliant. This is not a simple exercise.

In reality, this is Michelin's first full year of testing. As riders find the limits of the tyres, the teams are finding ways of extracting ever more performance, pushing the limit even further. That is loading the tyres in ways that Michelin had not been able to predict. They try to respond, creating new avenues for the riders to punish the tyres in way they had not imagined. Right now, the Michelins are taking a beating. It will take until the middle of next year before the French tyre maker truly gets a grip on the situation.















'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focussed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

Adam Wheeler Editor and MXGP/MotoGP correspondent Ray Archer Photographer Steve Matthes AMA MX and SX correspondent Cormac Ryan-Meenan MotoGP Photographer www.cormacgp.com Simon Cudby AMA SX/MXPhotographer Matthew Roberts Television Presenter and WSB correspondent **Gavin Emmett** TV commentator/Presenter and MotoGP Reporter Núria Garcia Cover Design Gabi Álvarez Web developer Hosting FireThumb7 - www.firethumb7.co.uk

Thanks to www.mototribu.com

PHOTO CREDITS

Ray Archer, Simon Cudby, CormacGP, Milagro, Graeme Brown/GeeBee Ducati Corse Press, Honda Pro Racing, Yamaha Racing

Cover shot: Marc Marquez by CormacGP www.cormacgp.com

This publication took a lot of time and effort to put together so please respect it! Nothing in this publication can be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the editorial team. For more information please visit www.ontrackoffroad.com and click 'Contact us'.